

Thomas Jefferson to James T. Callender, October 6, 1799 , from Thomas Jefferson to James T. Callender, September 6, 1799, from The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.

TO JAMES THOMSON CALLENDER¹

¹ From the *New York Evening Post*, Oct. 11, 1802.

Monticello, Oct. 6, 99.

Sir, —On receiving your favor of Sept. 29, I did believe it would be in my power to answer you satisfactorily on both points on which you asked information. I knew indeed that I had not made any particular memorandum of the sum which the C' de Vergennes supposed a treaty with the Porte would cost; but I expect that I had mentioned it either in my letter on the subject to Mr. Jay, or in that to Mr. Adams my colleague in the Barbary negociations. After a very long search yesterday I found both letters, but in neither have I stated any particular sum. They are of May 1786, and only say generally that in a conversation with the Ct. de Vergennes on the subject, he said that a treaty with the Porte would cost us *a great deal* of money, as great presents are expected at that court, and a great many claim them; and that we should not buy a peace one penny the cheaper at Algiers; that the Algerines did indeed acknowledge a certain dependence on the Porte, and availed themselves of it whenever any thing was to be gained by it, but disregarded it when it subjected them to any demand: and that at Algiers there were but too [*sic*] agents, money and fear. This is the statement in those letters, and my memory does not enable me to fix any particular sum having been named by him; but only generally that it was

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very far beyond any thing then at our command.—All who were members of Congress in 1786. may be supposed to remember this information, and if it could be understood to come to you through some such channel, it would save the public from reading all the blackguardism which would be vented on me were I quoted; not that this would weigh an atom with me, on any occasion where my avowal of either facts or opinions would be of public use; but whenever it will not, I then think it useful to keep myself out of the way of calumny.

On the other point I can be more certain. Georgia, N. Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania choose their electors by the people directly. In Massachusetts the choice is, first by the people in districts: But if

a candidate had not a majority of all the qualified voters of the district; it devolves on the legislature to appoint the elector for that district, besides, as they have but 14. districts (laid off for some state purpose) and are entitled to 16. electors, the legislature name the two extra ones in the first instance. Again, if any of those elected either by the people or legislature die, or decline to act, the residue of the electors fill up the vacancies themselves. In this way the people of Massachus. chose 7. electors on the last occasion, and the legislature 9. In New Hamp. Rho. Isld. Connec. Vermont, New-York, Jersey, Delaware and South Carolina, the legislature name electors. My information is good as to all these particulars except N. Hampshire and Connecticut: and as to them I think I am right; but speaking only from memory it should be further ascertained before asserted. I thank you for the proof sheets you inclosed me. Such papers cannot fail to produce the best effect. They inform the thinking part of the nation; and these again, supported by the taxgatherers as their vouchers, set the people to rights. You will know from whom this comes without a signature: the omission of which has rendered almost habitual with me by the curiosity of the post offices. Indeed a period is now approaching during which I shall

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discontinue writing letters as much as possible, knowing that every snare will be used to get hold of what may be perverted in the eyes of the public.